Melvin Butte Effects Analysis
Scenic Resources Report

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Introduction

This scenic resources report is an effects analysis for a proposed restoration and maintenance of forest health in stands that provide habitat for interior forest wildlife species and present a potential risk of large scale wildfires in the Melvin Butte area. Proposed actions developed include general strategies for conifer retention and the wildland urban interface with specific treatment options similar to those developed for the Popper Vegetation Management Project. This analysis describes anticipated effects on scenery, aesthetics, and visitor experience within the Scenic Views and Front Country management areas that are visible from main scenic travel routes such as Forest Road 16, other access roads, recreation sites, trails and overlooks, and from the Three Sisters Wilderness to the west, Whychus Wild and Scenic River corridor to the north, and from viewer locations along US Highway 20 to the northeast of the planning area.

The 5,375 acre planning area is located south of the city of Sisters, Oregon. The western portion of the planning area is approximately 1,000 feet west of Forest Road 16 into the Pole Creek Fire boundary, the southern portion is bounded by the Three Creeks LSR and Inventoried Roadless Area, the eastern portion is bounded by private lands owned by Fidelity Insurance Company, and the northern portion is bounded by the Sisters Area Fuels Reduction (SAFR) project area and the Whychus Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Management Direction

The Forest Plan for the Deschutes National Forest provides standards and guidelines for an array of land uses referred to as management areas. This analysis focuses on the management areas for Scenic Views and Front Country which are referred to by page number in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and described in terms of desired future conditions for various settings and how these are to be met by specified activities or actions. The Scenery Management System (SMS) is the methodology used by Forest Service landscape architects since 1996 to provide a visual impact assessment of effects to scenic resources which integrates social impacts to recreation visitors with physical impacts to the visitor experience.

The previous outdated Visual Management System (VMS) of 1974 which continues to be referenced in Forest Plans has not yet been updated to reference the currently applied Scenery Management System (SMS). To facilitate this change in methodology to SMS, a crosswalk is used to reference both systems in the following manner with current SMS methodology in bold and outdated VMS in parentheses: ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS)

There are 5,375 acres within the planning area which include 1,265 acres in the Scenic Views (MA-9) management area, 3,942 acres in the Front Country Seen/Unseen (MA-18) management area, and 167 acres in the Old Growth (MA-15) management area.

Scenic Views - MA9 (LRMP page 4-121)

The goal of the Scenic Views management area is to provide high quality scenery representing the natural character of Central Oregon. The general theme and objectives of Scenic Views is for landscapes seen from selected travel routes and use areas to be managed to maintain or enhance the appearance of the areas being viewed. To the casual observer, results of activities will either not be evident or will be visually subordinate to the natural landscape.

Timber harvest is permitted but only to protect and improve the scenic quality for the stands in both the short-term and long-term time frames. Timber stands, which have remained unmanaged in the past because of their visual sensitivity, will begin receiving treatment to avoid loss of the stand to natural causes. Landscapes containing negative visual elements, such as skid roads, activity residue, or cable corridors, will be rehabilitated.

The desired condition for ponderosa pine is to achieve and maintain visual diversity through variation of stand densities and size classes. Large, old-growth pine will remain an important constituent, with trees achieving 30 inches in diameter or larger and having deeply furrowed, yellow bark characteristics.

For other species, the desired condition requires obtaining visual diversity through either spatial distribution of age classes and mix of species through density manipulation or openings, or through a mixture of age classes within stands.

Ponderosa Pine in Scenic Views - Foreground M9-4 (LRMP page 4-122)

Ponderosa pine in Scenic Views - Foreground management areas will be managed to maintain or create a visual mosaic of numerous, large diameter, yellow-barked trees with stands of younger trees offering visual diversity and a sense of depth in landscapes viewed from travel routes, recreation use areas and other sensitive viewer locations.

Old growth characteristics, such as yellow, deeply-fissured bark are desirable. Diversity in species, where biologically possible, is desirable. Species such as vine maple, aspen and occasional stands of fir or lodgepole pine are desirable for added visual interest. Shrubs and groundcover species are also a desirable component. Small natural-appearing open spaces help provide a sense of depth and are a desirable visual component in these landscapes.

In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), visual changes will not be noticeable to the casual forest visitor. The casual forest visitor is the recreation-oriented person or motorist traveling through a portion of the forest who would relate to the visual environment based on the context of a landscape viewed, rather than focusing on an individual acre within a landscape. For the occasional pedestrian who wanders off a designated trail and views an individual acre

where a management activity has recently taken place, visual changes will be noticeable, even in Scenic Views - Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS).

In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), the timing of clean-up activities, slash from a thinning or tree removal activity, or other visible results of management activities, will not be visible to the casual forest visitor one year after the work has been completed. In regards to stand densities for immature trees, management practices will normally not focus on maximum growth, due to the emphasis on scenic quality. As a result, stand densities may be heavier or lighter than what would be considered necessary for optimum growth.

Visual openings in Scenic Views management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS) areas will result from management activities which harvest natural mortality (dying or severely diseased trees which occur in scattered pockets.) Some of these pockets may be enlarged by removing overstory trees, including large trees, where necessary to permit ponderosa pine regeneration where understory is lacking, or to release existing reproduction where it is suppressed.

Openings in Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS) will range from ¼ acre to 2 acres. An opening is visually in an "open" or untimbered condition until trees are an average of 10 feet tall on slopes less than 30 percent, and an average of 15 feet tall on slopes greater than 30 percent. Openings in Scenic Views management areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS) areas will range from ¼ acre to 5 acres and may include additional openings where size class diversity is visually insufficient.

Immature trees in Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS) and as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS) are to be thinned to maintain acceptable health and vigor of stands, with the objective of eventually producing replacement trees of 24 inch diameter and larger. In Scenic Views - Foreground areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), thin to slightly closer than normal spacing in order to provide full crowns and some screening. In areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), normal silviculturally prescribed spacings are acceptable.

Ponderosa Pine in Scenic Views – Middleground and Background M9-15 (LRMP page 4-124)

The desired condition for ponderosa pine is to provide a strong textural element when visible from viewer locations. Large full-crowned individual trees are a primary visual element to this landscape along with immature stands which add strong contrasts in color, texture and size. Over time, the immature stands will gradually replace the larger, old growth trees that perpetuate the desired coarsely-textured character. Small and natural appearing openings are also desired especially in areas where similar openings exist.

Immature stands are also important in Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas because of the dramatic effect provided with color contrasts, and they eventually become replacements for the larger, old growth trees that perpetuate the desired coarsely-textured character. Visible untimbered openings are desirable where the natural landscape contains similar openings, or where natural-appearing openings can provide additional diversity in landscapes where diversity is visually lacking. Immature trees, groundcover vegetation and mature overstory trees will remain important elements in these landscapes.

In Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), slash from a thinning or tree removal activity, or other visible results of management activities, will not be visible to the casual forest visitor one year after the work has been completed. In areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), logging residue or other results of management activities will not be obvious to the casual forest visitor two years following the activity.

In Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), the scale of man-caused openings must be similar to naturally-occurring openings. If natural openings do not exist, and there is a need to create openings, the openings will be designed to be as small as possible (considering the biological condition, technical feasibility, economics, etc.), and be designed to appear as naturally-occurring openings. In areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), man-caused openings, where visually appropriate, will normally range from ¼ acre to 20 acres.

Lodgepole Pine in Scenic Views - Foreground M9-51 (LRMP page 4-127)
Lodgepole Pine in Scenic Views - Foreground management areas are often older trees lacking diversity in species and size class. These older trees tend to have a deteriorating appearance with relatively small crowns so the management emphasis is on managing for healthier and fuller crowned younger trees instead of producing larger diameter, older trees.

The desired visual condition is a mosaic of even-aged stands with additional visual diversity provided by occasional groups of other tree and shrub species. Natural-appearing openings of varying sizes as well as the re-introduction of ponderosa pine whenever biologically feasible in stands that have reverted to pure lodgepole pine are desirable. The forest floor is often open and park-like with ground litter, shrubs and grasses providing additional variety.

Diversity in size classes, and the presence of natural-appearing openings that appear to rotate through time as younger stands grow up, will permit more of a visual perception of "depth" especially when viewing these Scenic Views - Foreground management areas from scenic travel routes or trails. Instead of the traditional "wall" of mature lodgepole along travel routes and adjacent to recreation use areas, younger lodgepole stands will eventually replace the older mature trees to create a transitional effect. The viewer will

have views looking through a forested setting instead of an unnatural “wall” or an unsightly clearcut. Many of the mature and overmature lodgepole stands on the Forest have been heavily impacted by the ongoing mountain pine beetle epidemic. Some landscapes have been severely changed as a result of catastrophic losses due to mountain pine beetles.

In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), slash from a thinning or tree removal activity, or other visible results of management activities, will not be visible to the casual forest visitor one year after the work has been completed. In Scenic Views management areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), logging residue or other results of management activities will not be obvious to the casual forest visitor two years following the activity.

Lodgepole Pine in Scenic Views - Middleground and Background M9-64 (LRMP page 4-129)

In Scenic Views - Middleground and Background management areas, lodgepole pine provides a primarily textural landscape element. Individual trees and the size of trees are not visually as important as the constant and often uniform texture and color the trees provide. For this reason, the desired visual condition in these viewing distances is a mosaic of relatively uniform textures created by maintaining canopy closure and healthy crowns. Variety is provided by the overall affect of the mosaic.

On the Forest, options to manage lodgepole stands for long periods of time are limited. By the time lodgepole stands reach about 80 to 100 years of age, increased susceptibility to insect and disease normally requires a regeneration treatment to maintain these landscapes in a healthy appearance. Because the life expectancy for these trees is relatively short, more acres will be in a recently-regenerated appearance at any single point in time. Natural-appearing openings in the forest canopy are desirable as long as they are shaped so that soil color contrasts do not dominate the landscape when viewed from significant viewer locations.

In Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), LRMP standards and guidelines will be met where regeneration openings appear to be natural, follow the horizontal character of the landscape and are of a proper scale as to not dominate the landscape. These natural-appearing openings will appear to rotate through time as younger stands mature.

Many of the mature and overmature lodgepole stands on the Forest have been heavily impacted by the ongoing mountain pine beetle epidemic. Some landscapes have been severely changed as a result of catastrophic losses due to mountain pine beetles, and may require many years to meet the desired visual condition.

Logging residue resulting from management activities will not be visible to the casual forest visitor two years after the work has been completed. Management practices will

focus on healthy, full-crowned trees and as a result, stand densities may be lighter than they presently are. Openings resulting from regeneration activities will normally range from 3 acres to 40 acres. Larger openings may be necessary to deal with mountain pine beetle problems.

The desired condition for lodgepole pine is to provide primarily a textural element in the landscape. A larger swath of uniform texture and color in a middleground zone often provides a more positive visual effect. A mosaic of relatively uniform textures created by maintaining tree canopy closure is an essential part of achieving this level of high quality scenery. Natural appearing openings are also desired as opposed to large shapes and sizes that provide too much contrast in soil color or sharp edges.

Mixed Conifer in Scenic Views - Foreground M9-20 (LRMP page 4-124)
The desired condition for mixed conifer is to provide diversity in tree and shrub species, various age and size classes in order to perpetuate and enhance the character of the surrounding and natural landscape.

In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), slash from a thinning or tree removal activity, or other visible results of management activities, will not be visible to the casual forest visitor one year after the work has been completed. In Scenic Views management areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), logging residue or other results of management activities will not be obvious to the casual forest visitor two years following the activity.

Small, natural-appearing openings, where they are lacking, should be created to achieve the desired visual character. These openings shall be planted with species that will result in visual variety and especially species offering fall color. In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), these openings will range from less than ¼ acre to 2 acres. In Scenic Views management areas classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity- SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), openings will range from less than ¼ acre to 5 acres.

Mixed Conifer in Scenic Views - Middleground and Background M9-34 (LRMP page 4-126)
Mixed conifer stands viewed as Middleground and Background will be managed to maintain or create a mosaic of stands with essentially continuous tree canopies with visual diversity provided by occasional natural-appearing openings which resemble those openings found in the natural landscape. From these viewing distances, immature trees are visually more important than larger old-growth trees, because the crowns of the younger trees are normally fuller and contribute to the overall textural element when viewed from a distance. However, some scattered larger trees will provide textural diversity and are sometimes discernible as indivuidual forms on these landscapes.

Species and size class diversity is also important in these viewing distances, but only when viewed as relatively small, natural appearing patches on the landscape, rather than

isolated, individual trees or shrubs. These patches create a visual mosaic that may provide additional visual variety through the changing seasons. Trees of all sizes may be removed from mixed conifer middleground and background where necessary to perpetuate the desired visual condition, control or prevent major insect and disease problems, enhance uunique landscape features, and provide access for recreation, special uses, mineral activities, and administrative purposes. Large diameter trees (24 inches d.b.h. or greater) will remain a significant component in mixed conifer within Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas.

In Scenic Views - Middleground and Background management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), the scale of man-caused openings must be similar to naturally-occurring openings. If natural openings do not exist, and there is a need to create openings, the openings will be designed to be as small as possible (considering the biological condition, technical feasibility, economics, etc.), and be designed to appear as naturally-occurring openings. In ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), man-caused openings, where visually appropriate, will normally range from ¼ acre to 20 acres.

In Scenic Views – Middleground and Background management areas classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS), slash from a thinning or tree removal activity, or other visible results of management activities, will not be visible to the casual forest visitor one year after the work has been completed. In ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS), logging residue or other results of management activities will not be obvious to the casual forest visitor two years following the activity.

Front Country Seen/Unseen – MA18 (LRMP page 4-159)
The goal of the Front Country management area is to provide and maintain a natural appearing forested landscape on the slopes northeast of the Three Sisters and Tam MacArthur Rim while providing high and sustainable levels of timber production. This management area occupies a place between Scenic Views and General Forest which calls for a greater emphasis on timber production rather than on scenic views. The Scenery Management System objective for Front Country management areas is ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS) as compared to ***Low Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Modification - VMS) in General Forest management areas which may apply to areas which are “unseen” from the viewing locations described in the next paragraph.

Certain viewer locations are considered important toward maintaining the desired visual condition of this management area. These significant viewer locations are along the Three Creeks Road, west from Highway 20 between Bend and Sisters, Awbrey Butte, the Redmond-Sisters Highway (126), and to the south from McKenzie Scenic Byway (242) west of Sisters.

The lower slopes of the viewed area are predominately Ponderosa pine and the upper portion ranges from Ponderosa pine overstory with dense white fir to pure lodgepole pine understory. Viewer distance to these areas ranges from 6 to 20 miles, making individual

trees and tree sizes indistinguishable. These stands are visually important because they provide a strong textural element that forefronts the dramatic Three Sisters.

The desired visual condition is a landscape where color contrasts are minimal and the full crowns of younger trees create a visually uniform, primarily dark green, gently rolling landscape. Management activities should not result in shapes or lines that are visible from significant viewer locations. Openings and textural changes are, and should be, generally small and remain subordinate in this landscape except during the winter months, when snow, weather and lighting conditions exaggerate color contrasts making openings more evident.

Scenic Views M18-1 (LRMP page 4-159)
In areas visible from significant viewer locations, management emphasis will focus on maintaining a uniform tree canopy. Openings are acceptable but should not dominate the landscape when uniform tree canopies cannot be maintained because of biological or topographic conditions.

Scenic Views M18-2 (LRMP page 4-160)
Openings resulting from vegetative management activities in areas viewed from significant viewer locations will be designed to follow natural topographic features, to avoid geometric shapes and straight lines, and to be sized to simulate naturally occurring openings. For management activities which may result in visible openings in the forest canopy, consult a landscape architect on the location, size and configuration for treatment units.

Scenic Views M18-3 (LRMP page 4-160)
Portions of the area which cannot be seen from the significant viewer locations will be managed similarly to land in the General Forest management area.

Scenic Views for Fire M18-27 (LRMP page 4-162)
Low intensity prescribed fires will be used to meet and promote the scenery objectives. This and other fuel management techniques will be used to minimize the hazard of a large high-intensity fire. If at any time during the course of the prescribed burn it appears that the objectives for the burn are not being met, all burning will cease.

Scenic Views for Fire M18-28 (LRMP page 4-162)
Wildfires can be suppressed using standard techniques. Control strategies will be developed to minimize impacts from suppression activities on the landscape. Visual contrasts will not be created through suppression techniques unless absolutely necessary.

Scenic Views for Fire M18-30 (LRMP page4-162)
A landscape architect shall be consulted for recommended restoration measures following wildfire suppression activities in this management area.

Analysis Methods

Methodology used for analyzing impacts to scenic resources is the Scenery Management System (SMS) which uses ***"Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management"*** issued in 1996. This new handbook replaces ***"Agriculture Handbook 462 – The Visual Management System (VMS)"*** issued in 1974. While many of the basic inventory elements of the Visual Management System are retained, the Scenery Management System incorporates both the natural and human processes into the ideas of managing for ecosystems and is the current methodology used by the Forest Service to inventory and evaluate impacts to scenic resources.

Scenery Management Objectives are defined in terms of Scenic Integrity Levels which describe existing conditions and whether the landscape is visually perceived to be "complete" or not. The most complete or highest rating for Scenic Integrity Levels means having little or no deviation from the landscape character that makes it appealing and attractive to visitors and local residents. In addition to describing existing conditions, Scenic Integrity Levels also describe the level of development allowed and ways to mitigate deviations from the area's landscape character.

The Forest Service implementing regulations currently establish a variety of Scenic Integrity Levels for Scenic Views – MA9 (LMRP page 4-121). These standards and guidelines include:

- **High Scenic Integrity - SMS** - Natural Appearing Landscape
  (Retention – VMS) - MA 9, SV-1 Foreground, SV-3 Middleground
- **Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS** - Slightly Altered Landscape
  (Partial Retention – VMS) - MA 9, SV-2 Foreground, SV-4 Middleground
- **Low Scenic Integrity - SMS** - Altered Landscape
  (Modification – VMS or General Forest) - MA 8, GFO within Foreground as well as Middleground

The distance zones for Scenic Views management areas for an observer are as follows:

- Immediate Foreground 0 - 300 feet
- Foreground 0 - ½ mile
- Middleground ½ mile - 4 miles
- Background 4 miles - horizon

Existing Condition

The planning area is visible from the top of Black Butte, Tam McArthur Rim, adjacent recreation trails and roads, and from the main travel corridor US Highway 20 located to the north of the planning area between Sisters and Bend. Dispersed camping, hiking, mountain biking, and hunting in this area provide a more wilderness-type of recreational experience than in other surrounding recreation areas on the Forest. Previous landscape treatments and the recent Pole Creek Fire have created larger openings and an ever increasingly mottled forest canopy that are visible from higher elevation recreation sites and viewpoints and for those traveling along the Forest Road 16, the main scenic travel access to the highly popular Three Creeks Lake recreation campground complex.

Other nearby popular recreation areas with scenic views include the Metolius-Windigo Trail for bikers and equestrians and the Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River Corridor located to the northwest of the planning area. It has a Scenic section which is designated for its Outstandingly Remarkable Value of its unique geological and hydrological features. Most visitors access Whychus Creek from Forest Road 16.

There are 1,265 acres of Scenic Views management area classified as ***High Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Retention - VMS) within the planning area. Most of these Scenic Views - Foreground management areas are along Forest Road 16.

There are 3,942 acres of Front Country Seen/Unseen management classified as ***Moderate Scenic Integrity - SMS*** (Partial Retention - VMS) within the planning area. Most of the Front Country Seen areas are located on the east side of the planning area on the lower slopes of the Cascades Range. These areas are mostly visible from significant viewer locations along Highway 20 between Bend and Sisters. Most of the Front Country Seen/Unseen management areas are located to the east of the Scenic views management area along Road 16.

Environmental Consequences

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore and maintain forest health in stands that provide habitat for interior forest wildlife species and present a potential risk of large scale wildfires in the Melvin Butte area. Proposed actions developed include general strategies for conifer retention and the wildland urban interface with specific treatment options similar to those developed for the Popper Vegetation Management Project.

There is a need to reduce fuel loadings and forest vegetation density to lessen the risk of large wildfires to nearby communities and key ecosystem components, such as large old trees. Recent large wildfires have dramatically changed the landscape leaving the project area isolated and thereby increasing the urgency to protect what remains as unburned forest. The project area is currently at risk of stand replacement wildfire associated with insects, disease, and overstocking. This project would also meet a need to provide wood products to the local and regional economy.

Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on scenic resources are analyzed for possible impacts to scenic views and whether proposed actions and mitigations will meet the standards and guidelines in the LRMP for Scenic Views and Front Country Seen/Unseen management areas. Cleanup must occur within one or two years depending upon the Scenery Management classification. Prescribed fire must be less than 5 acres with a naturally appearing shape and scorching must be limited to the lower 1/3 of the forest canopy. If the requirements for the timing of cleanup, size of burn area, and amount of scorch cannot be met, the Forest Plan may be amended if reasons for the proposed actions are justified in accomplishing Forest goals.

Within the Scenic Views management areas, impacts that potentially affect the visitor expectations and experience are analyzed within short-term (within 5 years) and long-term (beyond 5 years) timeframes. Often the short-term impacts are most evident to

visitors within immediate Scenic Views – Immediate Foreground landscapes (0-300 feet) as well as Foreground landscapes (300 feet to ½ mile) along main access roads, scenic travel corridors, recreation trails, and developed or dispersed recreation sites. These are the most critical corridors requiring cleanup as soon as possible or other mitigation measures to ensure restoration or recovery of scenic views within a reasonable timeframe.

The Front Country Seen/Unseen management areas are often middleground (1/2 mile to 4 miles) and background landscapes (4 miles to horizon). There are usually prominent landscape features such as buttes or mountain range slopes and foothills that are visible from viewer locations along major travel corridors or from recreational trails, sites, and overlooks. Cleanup usually occurs within two years of proposed actions in order to provide and maintain a uniform tree canopy as seen from major travel corridors or viewpoints.

Alternative 1 (No Action)
There would be no reduction of hazardous ladder fuels in foreground areas of Forest Roads 16, 1620, and 1628 and there would be no reduction of hazardous ladder fuels along the western boundary of the Cascade Timberlands property and along the eastern edge of the project area would help prevent fires from moving from national Forest lands onto private property and vice versa.

Although previous treatments along Road 16 have opened up some views in Scenic Views - Foreground management areas and enhanced visibility of old growth trees in the past, the lack of future treatments would result in diminished scenic views to the desired natural character of the surrounding landscape and a changed visitor experience for those anticipating and expecting to see open views and a healthy forest with safe easy access to recreation areas.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) and Alternative 3
Direct and Indirect Effects:
In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas along Forest Road 16 classified as High Scenic Integrity – SMS (Retention – VMS), the blackening and scorching of vegetation and tree trunks and slash cleanup would be visible for more than one year and would not meet standards and guidelines for scenic quality. In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas along Forest Road 16 classified as Moderate Scenic Integrity – SMS (Partial Retention – VMS), the blackening and scorching of vegetation and tree trunks and slash cleanup would be visible for more than two years and would not meet standards and guidelines for scenic quality. A Forest Plan amendment would be required to increase this from one year and two years to a five year period.

In Scenic Views – Foreground management areas along Road 16, prescribed fire is proposed to reduce the risk of wildfire, create a defensible fuel break, and provide for safe ingress of fire suppression resources and egress of the public in the event of a wildfire event. Allowing for prescribed burn units exceeding the five acre limitation for

fuels treatments would not meet standards and guidelines for scenic quality. A Forest Plan amendment would be required to exceed the five acre limitation for fuels treatment. About 1,217 acres in the Scenic Views – Foreground management area are included in this proposed Forest Plan amendment for Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. All units would be prescribed burned. The proposed underburning units are: Units 2, 4, 5, 6, 18, 19, 29, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 48, 49, 52, 56, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 75, 82, 84, 85, 88, 91, 92, 94, 97, 108, 109, and 110.

Scenic Views Enhancement Treatment Area (240 acres): The goal is to meet the direction for the Scenic Views management area.

Due to a stand replacement fire that occurred during the 2012 Pole Creek Fire along a Scenic Views -Foreground management area adjacent to and west of Forest Road 16, scenic quality standards and guidelines are not being met. The recreating public travels on Forest Road 16 to recreation sites in the area. In order to meet the long-term goals for this Scenic Views – Foreground management area that is classified as High Scenic Integrity – SMS (Retention – VMS), green trees and scattered clusters of fire killed trees would remain in order to slowly transition the area to become scenic once again in the future. It would also require removal of some of the fire killed trees to create a random cluster grouping and feathered edge instead of a uniformed shape and straight edge appearance of trees when viewed from the road. Newly planted trees in the open areas surrounding the scattered clusters of dead trees would restore scenic quality over time by eventually changing the appearance of this edge of the forest over time from burned to green. Logging debris would be disposed of adjacent to the road to meet scenic quality standards and guidelines.

Cumulative Effects:
See the section of the environmental assessment *Cumulative Effects of Site-Specific Forest Plan Amendments at the Forest Level* for a discussion of the overall cumulative effects on the proposed Melvin Butte project forest Plan amendments.

References
USDA Forest Service, 1990. *Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)*

USDA Forest Service, 1996. *Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management*